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Home > NewsRoom > Speeches

**Speaking Notes for
THE HONOURABLE ROB NICHOLSON, P.C., Q.C.,
M.P. for Niagara Falls
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada
for the**

Announcement of Tabling of Legislation to Strengthen the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*

**Ottawa, Ontario
November 19, 2007**

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Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased to be here with my colleague Minister Blackburn to announce another step in our Government's plan toward tackling crime and strengthening the security of Canadians.

A little over an hour ago, our Government tabled legislation to better protect communities from dangerous young offenders.

Across the country, Canadians are growing more concerned at the rate of youth criminal activity, and the seriousness of these crimes.

In Nova Scotia, for example, there was a fatal accident caused by a young offender out on bail. Toronto has witnessed far too many recent shootings by young people. And Winnipeg faces an explosion in car thefts by troubled teens.

This is why, in the last election, our Government made a commitment to make changes to the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.

Canadians expect adult offenders to face meaningful consequences for serious crimes. The same must hold true for young offenders. Judges must be given greater authority to denounce, deter and detain youth in the justice system.

Our first amendment is to include deterrence and denunciation in the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* as sentencing principles. This change would allow judges to impose punishments with the objective of deterring and denouncing the young person's actions. Currently under the YCJA, this is *not* the purpose of a youth sentence.

We are also proposing to change the current pre-trial detention provision in the Act. This change will make it easier to detain youth in custody *prior* to their trials **if** the youth are a danger to society.

The new pre-trial detention measures would apply to those who have committed an offence **that** creates a danger of causing serious bodily harm, and those who have breached previous conditions of release.

Various stakeholders – including my provincial and territorial counterparts – have long called for

changes to the *Act*. Nova Scotia has shared with me their concerns about detaining dangerous youth prior to their trials, and we believe that an immediate amendment is needed to ensure that this can in fact be done.

In addition to these proposed amendments, our Government will be launching a broader review of the youth justice system next year. It will mark the 100 th anniversary of this country's system of youth criminal justice, and the fifth anniversary of the current *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. We will provide details of the review, including the scope of the review, in the near future.

This bill is one in a new series of 'Tackling Crime' bills that our Government is introducing this session.

Last month we tabled our comprehensive *Tackling Violent Crime Act*. This bill will achieve five important things. It will better protect youth from sexual predators, and protect society from dangerous offenders. It will get serious with drug-impaired drivers, and toughen sentencing and bail for those who commit serious gun crimes.

In the past 21 months, we have also:

- introduced a National Anti-drug Strategy;
- invested in crime prevention community projects that target youth;
- passed legislation to penalize against street racing; and
- passed legislation to end house arrest for serious personal injury offences.

We have also announced that we will

- table a bill to get tough on the production and sale of illegal drugs; and
- table a bill to fight illegal drug crime.

Our Government was elected to build a strong, safer, better Canada. We said we would tackle crime, and we remain committed to that goal – targeting crimes that affect Canadians most.

For any government, there is no greater duty than the protection of Canadians.

For the Ottawa police officers with me today, there is no greater duty than the protection of the citizens of this city. I am proud to stand here with Ottawa Chief of Police Vern White; Staff Sergeant Mike Callaghan of the Guns & Gang Unit of the Youth Intervention and Diversion Section; and Louise Loge of the Youth Intervention and Diversion Section. Together they provide a spectrum of response including pre-charge diversion and extrajudicial measures for non-violent offenders to processing violent youth through the formal youth justice process. The officers will elaborate.

To conclude, our Government remains unwavering in its determination to keep Canadians safe.

By tabling this bill today, we are working to hold young lawbreakers accountable to their victims and their community, and instil within them a sense of responsibility for their delinquent or criminal behaviour.

Thank you. Now my colleague Minister Blackburn will say a few words...

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